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## SOCIAL IDEALS AND SOCIAL PROGRESS.

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**I**N THE individual the growth from unconsciousness to consciousness—from a feeling to an intelligent being—is regarded as natural and good. Deplore as we may the ends which some individuals or states are striving to attain, we nevertheless regard the mere existence of ideals and carefully selected means as indicative of an advance over that condition where all action is automatic. Even the man whose activities are co-ordinated to evil ends is considered as the superior to him who is slave to every passing whim and fancy. Ibsen expressed this truth in "Peer Gynt." Dante populated the entrance to the Inferno with the latter class. And we have in Eliot's "Middlemarch" a like confirmation in the expression—"To have tried and failed is better than never to have made an effort good enough to be called a failure."

Social evolution, likewise, is a progression from instinctive to intelligent action. The entrance of social ideals and volitions into the evolutionary process marks a transition from imperfection to approximate perfection; from slavery to freedom; from a state where all are "slaves to the mere impulses of appetite" to a state where all are freed by "obedience to laws which they themselves prescribe." For even the evils incident to mistaken ideals or illy chosen means are tolerable on the grounds that perfection can be reached only through struggles. We would rather reach truth through error, if necessary, than stumble upon it through emotion; because intellectual development is the means by which, and the end for which, society exists.

We find a striking confirmation of this truth from a quarter least expected. From the "Preliminary to Political Organization" by H. Spencer (Part V—Principles of Sociology) we quote the following:

Mark now, however, that while this merciless discipline of Nature, "red in tooth and claw" has been essential to the progress of sentient life, its persistence through all time with all creatures must not be inferred. The high organization evolved by and for this universal conflict, is not necessarily forever employed to like ends. The resulting power and intelligence admit of being far otherwise employed. Not for offence and defence only are the inherited structures useful, but for various other purposes, and these purposes may finally become the exclusive purposes.

Yet, in spite of this, we find him employed in recent issues of the *Forum*, through the reprint of his various essays on social subjects, to sound a solemn warning, in the name of evolution and of reason, against modern legislative tendencies. For the "merciless discipline" of physical conflict, it seems, there must be substituted the equally pitiless discipline of unrestricted industrial competition. Instead of the conflict which eliminates the physical unfit, we must have the conflict which eliminates the industrial unfit; for bodily slavery, there must be substituted industrial slavery; for the suppression of physical activities, the suppression of intelligence and will. In this bitter conflict of men, the unfit will be eliminated by the effective method of starvation, if necessary. Let there be no conscious state-action to diminish the fierceness of the struggle. Such action is unwise in principle and must be disastrous in its effects. The positive functions of the state must be strictly limited to those involved in what Huxley called "the great negative commandment—"Thou shalt not allow any man to interfere with the liberty of another man." The forces inherent in the social organism—blind, unconscious, though they be—the "merciless discipline" of the struggle for existence, which created and perpetuated society, of themselves will produce the ideal race. "Evil," he says, "has a curative effect." Social evils—social suffering—have a tendency to effect their own cure. The joint reactions of social aggregates, as well as the unconscious inter-actions of the component social atoms, will not fail in their "beneficent" operation. Interference by the social intelligence to ameliorate con-

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ditions will only intensify the suffering; will surely produce still more acute pain, necessitating still further interference, until, by a process of "fructifying causation," we become entangled in a network of bureaucracy, from which it will be impossible to extricate ourselves.

The implications contained in this doctrine are vital. It means simply that state-action, with a view of limiting the struggle for existence in any form, is evil in itself; not only because it obstructs the operation of forces inherent in society, which constitute the only means of continued progress; but also because it will lead to a condition where the individual is enslaved by his own laws. It sounds the death warrant of all social legislation. It declares, simply and categorically, that modern legislation is unnatural in its origin and vicious in its results. Social intelligence should not be developed by exercise because it has no legitimate place in the evolutionary process. It will ultimately create a vast militant-industrial state, in which the members are slaves to an officialdom created by their laws. Instinct—not intelligence; unlimited warfare—not social ethics are the means of all social progress.

Nothing is more obvious than the fact that this doctrine implies the negation of the value of ideals in social evolution. It advocates a permanent reversion to the infant state, where development is effected by unconscious reactions. It declares that, while the law of growth in the individual is from unconsciousness to consciousness and that, while this growth is a transition from slavery to freedom, the application of the law to society is not sanctioned by reason. The determining factor in social evolution is, and forever must be, among all races, the promotion of the social welfare by individual effort—without coercion. For the attempt to realize social ideals through state-action involves coercion and slavery; not, as in the individual, a higher slavery to the dictates of reason, but a slavery to a vast army created to enforce the decrees of the public will.

But social consciousness has a legitimate place in social

evolution. Dispute its utility as we may; revolt as we may against its tendencies, the very character of society makes it inevitable that state-action with a view of realizing social ideals be an ever-increasing factor in determining the structure and development of the state. Social forms necessarily reflect the average individual characters. Where the component individuals are ruled largely by feeling, instinct, and circumstance, the successive modifications in the social structure are determined by like factors. As intelligence and will emerge from their obscurity, and the individuals of the race become more or less self-determining, the social organism, likewise, rises above an existence, whose activities are determined by unconscious forces, and becomes to some extent a self-determining entity; a being which realizes its ends through carefully selected means.

Far from this development, being, as Spencer supposes, unnatural and disastrous, it has been both necessary and beneficial. It is in entire accord with the evolutionary process which has advanced man to his present state. For, as Huxley said, "of all the successive states to which society has attained, that most nearly approaches perfection, in which the warfare of the individual is most strictly limited."

Society is something more than a dead abstraction—a mental concept. No one has realized this more clearly than Spencer whose descriptions of the analogy which subsists between the social and the individual organism, are the most interesting and instructive we have. The bond which unites men into societies is something very real and concrete; just as real as the force which binds the atoms of hydrogen and oxygen together in a molecule of water. And if this analogy counts for anything at all it points clearly to the fact that, as the activities of the individual are the result of the complex activities of the compounded elements entering into his structure; so the activities of a society can be nothing more nor less than the result of the activities of the compounded individuals. If these individuals progress through consciously chosen

means to definite ends, so must the society develop in the same manner.

It is unnatural to suppose that individuals who attempt to attain their ends through conscious effort should collectively will that the realization of social ideals should be left to be determined by an unrestricted struggle for life; the character of which is necessarily fatal to many things they consider necessary to social progress. The very fact that man realized that happiness consists in conscious effort to attain certain ends would lead him to extend the generalization: to suppose that, collectively, ideals might be realized in the same manner. And, because social ideals are merely the compound of individual ideals, and laws are nothing but the product of the automatic reaction of the social will to what the social intelligence regards as good, expressed and enforced by that specialized portion of society called the government, it was both natural and necessary that society should attempt consciously to realize its ideals by putting a limit on the struggle for existence through governmental decrees. The very nature of society demanded such an action; rendered it inevitable.

Furthermore, laws imply, not the suppression of the action of the struggle between individuals, but the continuation of that struggle under conditions more favorable to the progress of the human race. These conditions are not an arbitrary creation; they do not negate or destroy the process of evolution, but are, themselves, an expression of that process—a crystallized variation of exactly the same nature as the spontaneous variations occurring in organic nature, but the more readily fixed and universalized because of the existence of intelligence. The enunciation of a new social truth, such as the statement that “governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed” is strictly a “spontaneous variation”; as strictly one as was the appearance of short legs in the Ancon sheep. It is a natural psychical variation, as truly the effect of natural laws—the product of Nature, if you will, as any physical modification in the structure of the mem-

bers of a species. That this variation is perpetuated by laws, institutions and customs is a necessary consequence of its nature. The successive modifications of the social structure correspond to successive types in the history of a species. We know at least as much of their genesis, development and perpetuation as we do of the genesis, development and perpetuation of characters purely physical. That their essence is different, is mental rather than physiological, does not necessitate the formation of a new generalization to comprehend them. The formulæ of evolution, rightly understood, are broad enough to embrace this new phenomenon—ethical man. The whole difficulty of those who interpret these formulæ to mean that the state should let individuals fight it out among themselves arises from their failure to realize that man is a social animal, endowed with intelligence: a moral being, who cannot be developed under such conditions.

No one saw more clearly than Spencer that unconscious development through individual effort had reduced man to a condition little better than slavery. "This liberty (of the wage-earning factory hand)," he said, "amounts in practice to little more than the ability to exchange one slavery for another; since, fit only for his particular occupation he has rarely the opportunity of doing anything more than to decide in what mill he will pass the greater part of his dreary days. The coercion of circumstance often bears more hardly upon him than the coercion of a master does on one in bondage." Defending this state, he continues—"it seems that in the course of social progress, parts, more or less large, are sacrificed for the benefit of society as a whole. . . . In either case men are used up for the benefit of prosperity; and, so long as they go on multiplying in excess of the means of subsistence, there appears no remedy."

The difficulty here is the unwarranted assumption that this sacrifice was only temporary; and that it was subserving the production of higher types. But it is hardly necessary to show on either historical or rational grounds,

that the contrary was and must be the case. Spencer himself could find no escape but in the weak advocacy of a co-operative factory in which the workers deputed a commission to act as manager, and were paid on a *pièce-work* basis. Since his time, however, inventions rendering possible the ownership of almost all means of production and exchange by a few individuals have made conditions still more acute. Mark, however, that the nature of the struggle became such that the class of industrial fit was still more limited. If the ideal of the race were the production of a class of industrial fit, this unrestricted struggle itself defeated that end. Not a race, but a few hundred "fit" acquired ownership of the agencies of production and with them the control of a vast portion of the workers' lives and actions. Other evils, too well known to require mention, such as the formation of a leisure class, which contributed little to social progress, were attendant results. Here and there a few individuals, with exceptional abilities along specialized lines, were seen breaking into the class of industrial rulers. But there was, and is, nothing in the struggle to indicate that these abilities would be fixed and transmitted to such an extent that the final result would be the survival of a class of "fittest" possessing such characteristics as are essential to industrial supremacy.

The logical end of this unrestricted struggle must ultimately have been a permanent condition of slavery for the many and the rule of the few; the destruction of what Kant called the "unsocial" element in man—the very thing Spencer warns us our attempts to diminish the bitterness of industrial competition will bring about.

But apart from the fact that the continuation of this pitiless industrial warfare failed to produce the conditions necessary to the full expression of industrial ability, still graver evils accompanied the process. Pure industrial supremacy, abilities which conduced to industrial success, came to be regarded as the ideals of the age. Cunning, decisiveness, deceit, everything which would enable one man to acquire control over another, were considered as



highly desirable qualities. That moral principle, so beautifully expressed by Tennyson—"For virtue lives from man to man; and not, O, God, from man to Thee!" was necessarily discarded as an impediment to success. Worth was measured in terms of wealth. Reverence, altruism, and those other virtues, slowly acquired through countless centuries, were relegated to a position inferior to those qualities conducing to industrial success.

The positive effects of this condition were both mental and physical. Material ideals supplied an atmosphere in which the other higher faculties of man—creative intelligence, constructive imagination, will, could not grow. Science, art, literature, were stifled by the lack of conditions necessary to life and growth. We are all familiar with the truth that genius and talent require proper mental conditions in which to expand. The absence of these conditions—the existence, in fact, of a contrary influence, produced a mental and moral stagnancy, the results of which have been keenly felt in this country. The prostitution of intellect to money, to financial success, the absence of true literature, the servile fawning to popular taste, a fatal lack of morality in all things—are effects positively experienced.

Among the more concrete effects was the limitation of man's activities to industry. The sharpness of the struggle to exist rendered impossible the full and equal development of all faculties. The leisure class did not devote their energies to culture; the poorer class could not. The difficulty of procuring means of sustenance undoubtedly suppressed the activities of many individuals who might have made contributions of great value to the social welfare. Economic conditions and ideals, which perpetuated for years the vicious system of child labor, must necessarily have prevented the development of many individuals who, under more favorable circumstances, would have proved valuable to society. The time necessary to procure the bare necessities of life, the false ideals of what constituted such necessities, directly produced by the economic strug-

gle, prevented, either wholly or partly, the exercise of those higher faculties, the development of which is at once the end and means of social progress.

The social ideals which found expression in governmental interference with the condition of social and economic life, depend upon several determinate factors. First of all, there is the recognition of the fact that unlimited competition did not and could not afford a suitable basis for the development of industrial abilities. Established institutions, vast industrial units, produced in the past, exerted an unfavorable influence on the future. Isolated examples of men of vast abilities forging to the front, despite the deterrent factors of birth, poverty and environment, only served to accentuate the fact that men of lesser ability or less glaring talents must be suppressed by economic conditions. So political thinkers divided into two opposing camps. The one favored a reversion to the condition of individual competition which preceded the present state. The other, recognizing the hopelessness of such a proposition, favored effective regulation of these large units of production and exchange. But both served to illustrate the fact that the individual selfishness, which Spencer considers the most important causative factor in progress, when expressed industrially was doing positive harm; was reducing the members of society to a state of permanent industrial servitude.

While the recognition of this fact undoubtedly exerted the strongest influence in shaping social ideals, a deeper truth was present in the social intelligence, with a greater or less degree of consciousness. This was the realization of the fact that it was highly important that this unsocial element in man, this desire to succeed, express itself in other than purely economic terms. Thinkers began to point out that higher ethics—superior intelligence—were not being conserved by the unrestricted struggle to live. They insisted that the true end of social evolution, of the whole evolutionary process, must be the “highest individual happiness consistent with the social welfare.” And they

declared that, as individual happiness consists in the free and healthy exercise of all faculties, so social happiness could be promoted only by affording to all the means of developing such faculties. Society must progress by utilizing to the utmost, not only industrial abilities, but the higher intellectual powers which express themselves in science, literature and art. And every limit placed on the struggle for existence, every successful attempt to diminish the labors necessary to live, rendered man less animal and more rational. Existence itself having been provided for—or, at least, the effort necessary to secure life having been diminished—the time at hand for the exercise of other faculties is correspondingly increased. Society having recognized, to some extent, the purpose of its existence, is endeavoring, at least, to realize this purpose through intelligent state-action. The basic law of social growth is now that progress lies in conscious attempts to realize social ideals.

There is no doubt that as society progresses this latter factor will acquire more definite shape and greater causative power. This, of course, must depend upon the degree of individual development. The limitations we place on industrial warfare must keep constant pace with the ability of individuals to develop under the changed social forms.

Far from this doctrine lending support to Socialism, there is nothing more fatally opposed to it. Socialists favor the establishment of a society in advance of average individual development. They propose to create a state in which existence is practically assured by the body social, and the development of individual powers depends entirely on the individual; the only reward of such exercise being the happiness resultant upon individual exertion.

But the fact that individual growth is possible only under social forms which adequately express the acquired characters and tendencies of the race, definitely prohibits the success of such a state. Limitations will be put on the struggle for existence only as the successively higher types realize that they cannot properly develop under conditions

which obtained in preceding ages. When that "unsocial" tendency in man, which Kant defined as the creator of all the art, all the learning, all the culture which adorn humanity, finds its principal expression in intellectual and moral pursuits, and the ideal of industrial fitness has been limited to a narrow sphere, then the socialistic state may be possible. But any attempt to realize it before that time can be successful only by the establishment of a "civil regimentation parallel to military regimentation" the evils of which Spencer depicts so forcibly in the "Principles of Sociology."

This does not necessarily limit us to Rousseau's metaphysical doctrine that the sovereign cannot err. But it does involve the principle that it will never err sufficiently long in one direction to render dissolution of the state necessary. While organized agitation in favor of an ideal, such as Socialism, may temporarily divert legislation in the wrong direction, the general rule is that the people hold permanently to a safe mean. Furthermore, the relative impotence of the will to realize immediately its ideals, will forever operate as a deterrent influence to extreme state interference.

Social progress now, as in the past, is largely determined by unconscious forces. Individuals and groups of individuals still react to external circumstances. Within the limits defined by society, the pursuit of individual ends will probably for all time modify the social structure and indirectly promote the social welfare. Even reactions to forces outside the social organism are still the rule. Treaties, arbitration agreements, etc., conceived and approved of in saner moments, are swept aside by recurrent tides of passion. Many ages must elapse before the most important factor in social evolution is conscious action towards definite ideals. For the present, we must rest content with the fact that steady progress is being made towards such a state; and that in proportion as the development of the individual is determined by intelligence and will, the

social growth will be determined in a larger degree by the same factors.

With the recognition of these truths, the great objections advanced by Spencer that governmental interference leads to slavery automatically disappears. The extent of the interference being always dependent upon the realization of its necessity in order to furnish the conditions necessary to the full development of the type, we may safely leave it to each age to decide what limits it is desirable to set on governmental interference. The unsocial element in man will instinctively protect itself against undue suppression. "The question," said Huxley, "when to draw the line between those things with which the state ought, and those with which it ought not, to interfere, then, is one which must be left to be decided separately for each individual case."

It is not logical to indict a movement on the grounds that it will eventually produce in some far-distant future a social state, the establishment of which at the present time would be disastrous. It is not rational, not in accord with what we know of evolution, to say that such a state would mean slavery, merely because it could be rendered effective at the present time only by coercion. This is a question with which we are not able to deal; it presents a problem of maxima and minima in social calculus which no one thinker is able to solve.

Individual acts of the government may certainly be criticized on the grounds that the race is not ready for them; social forms may be attacked because they do not adequately express the advanced character of the race. But those who utter a protest against the enlargement of the circle of governmental activities, because of the presumed tendencies of such action, or because such interference by the state is conscious, are just as illogical as the Socialist who criticizes unconscious development through industrial struggles on the grounds of its nature and its tendencies; who desires to establish a state as far above the average social development as that advocated by the indi-

vidualist is behind it. Between these two extremes, individualism and socialism, society advances, with an ever increasing consciousness of its purpose and an ever increasing use of carefully selected means to attain that purpose—to what we regard as the true end of the evolutionary process—the realization of the full possibilities of organic matter and mind. And if the character of this growth is such that the operation of natural selection is slowly confined within successively narrower limits, and intelligent direction of social forces exerts an increasingly larger influence, it is only because the fact of human consciousness renders this process natural and beneficial.

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